

Executive Summary

Wenatchee Public Schools

Superintendent Search Leadership Profile

November 13, 2018

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in October 2018 for the position of Superintendent of the Wenatchee Public Schools. The data contained herein were obtained from input received by HYA consultants Hank Harris and Barbara Young when they conducted individual interviews and focus groups – as well as from the results of the online survey completed by stakeholders. The surveys interviews, and focus group meetings were structured to gather input to assist the Board in determining the primary characteristics desired in the new superintendent. Additionally, the stakeholder interviews and focus groups provided information for the consultants and for prospective applicants regarding the strengths of the District and some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years.

Participation

355 individuals¹ served in Focus Groups, and 920 individuals² participated in the online survey. The numbers of participants, by stakeholder group are listed below:

Focus Group/Interviews	Number Involved
School Board	5
Administrators and Supervisors	42
Teachers including Specialists	28
Classified/Confidential Staff	31
Former Board Members	5
Parents and Community Members	175
Students	69
Total	355

¹ The total number is approximate because a small number of stakeholders opted to participate in multiple focus groups.

² Also, we can assume that some of the Focus Group attendees also participated in the online survey; thus, the total number of participants can be expected to be slightly less than the total of these two numbers.

The *Superintendent Search Survey* report is provided under separate cover and is meant to be a complementary piece to this *Leadership Profile* Report. Our proposed *Desired Characteristics*, which is a stand-alone presented for Board action, is included in this document and will be spoken to shortly.

It should be emphasized that the delineations below are not a scientific sampling, nor should they necessarily be viewed as representing a majority opinion. Items are included if, in the consultants' judgment, they warranted the Board's attention, and are listed in order of prevalence.

Strengths of the District

I. **A Great Place to Live and Work.**

Those who live here delight in the natural beauty and the outdoor opportunities that are available to those who reside in the Valley. Wenatchee, often seen by locals as a still well-kept secret from the rest of the universe, is a spectacular place to live and work. Although growth has arrived and more growth is clearly on the horizon, this is a city that its inhabitants adore, and many young people who grew up here and left for university or for careers in more populated areas elsewhere return home to settle and perhaps raise their own families. There is also a perceived sense of calmness, safety, and serenity. There is a tremendous pride of place.

II. **Connectedness and Generosity of the Community.**

Wenatchee's civic pride is prevalent. For so many stakeholders, even more salient than the physical beauty and the recreation options so widely available is a deep commitment to, and love of, the community itself. Wenatchee is place of generous spirit, and the notion of a "generous community" repeatedly emerged throughout our interviews: *We look out for each other and we take care of each other.* Examples are numerous – from individual stories of families who suffer personal tragedies who are then embraced by armies of strangers, to the longstanding success of Wenatchee's *Make a Difference Day* at a time when other cities' such programs struggle. This is a remarkable place where people care about each other.

III. **Extraordinary Co-curricular Opportunities for Youth.**

Wenatchee excels in the area of connected learning, and herculean efforts have gone in to creating a set of co-curricular options for Wenatchee's youth that are the envy of the region and beyond. Many such options have earned state and national renown. Governor Inslee has identified Wenatchee's *Wenatchee Learns* as a trailblazing program and has modeled the state's own ambitious program on this; and the

National Governors Association has identified *Wenatchee Learns* as a Learning Laboratory for the development of partnerships with the community that support a continuum of career-connected learning experiences for youth both in and out of school. The award-winning Mariachi program and Robotics programs, the Debate Club and the Advanced Engineering Program at WHS, project-based learning in STEM that is considered a pioneer in the Pacific Northwest – the list is remarkable; and all of this in addition to an extraordinary music and arts program and athletics program that in total would be the envy of districts across the country.

IV. Talented Teachers and Support Staff who Routinely Go the Extra Mile.

The quality of staff in Wenatchee is highly regarded. Wenatchee boasts over ninety Nationally Board Certified teachers, and we heard story after story of an amazing and dedicated workforce: teachers who go the extra mile time and time again; and classified staff with incredible work ethic and devotion to the students they serve. Recognizing also that the context of teaching has changed – that there are far more challenges to deal with today than there were a decade or two ago – your stakeholders, particularly parents and students, spoke with admiration about the teachers and staff who support them and their children.

V. High-Quality Bilingual Programming at the Elementary Level.

Many stakeholders spoke to the innovative practices in ELL and bilingual programming at several of the District’s elementary schools. Some schools in particular were repeatedly identified for the quality of programs they offer their students. At times, these accolades were tempered by uncertainty about the future of a beloved program, or why certain programs are not replicated elsewhere in the District – but notwithstanding those worries, this is an area of great pride, and is hailed by many families, staff, and community members.

VI. Vibrant and Diverse Community.

As Wenatchee has grown, the demographics have shifted, and Wenatchee now boasts a culturally rich and vibrant community, a truly multicultural community. This dynamic is widely viewed as a treasured and welcome part of the fabric of a “newer” Wenatchee. Wenatchee’s award-winning Mariachi program is but one of example of the immense contributions of the city’s Latino community on the schools and population at large.

VII. Social-Emotional Support.

Several stakeholders spoke about the commitment to social/emotional learning that is taking place at various locations within the schools and beyond. High school

students reported that they had staff who they were comfortable reaching out to for academic and emotional support.

Challenges and Issues Facing Wenatchee Public Schools

I. Governance.

The District's largest challenges are twofold, and they are connected. We have separated into Item #I and Item #II but there is overlap.

There is significant, palpable concern about the internal dynamics of the Board of Directors and the impact it has on the operation of the District. We heard many hard words used to describe the quality of the Board leadership – sometimes associated with one subgroup of Board members or another subgroup, and sometimes associated with the whole of the Board. Perhaps the most telling phrase we heard repeated was *“We are embarrassed by our Board.”* There is concern that a wise and capable Superintendent candidate would not choose to come to Wenatchee given the acrimony among the Directors.

Consultants' note: We write this with somberness. Your consultants have met with each Board member individually and have found each to be a person of high intelligence, high capacity, likability, and tremendous commitment to the schools of the community. In some districts, Board disquiet can be a byproduct of an ill-suited or ill-mannered Board member being elected to the post. This is not the case in Wenatchee - and that gives us hope. But despite that, the Board dynamic currently serves as a significant distraction from hard work at best, and undermines quality educational progress at its worst.

II. Trust in Leadership.

There is a general distrust of school leadership, some of which is associated with the first item in this section, and some that probably predates or is disassociated from Board interactions. A general confusion about the District Office, and how decisions are made, seems to be pervasive. Many have spoken about lack of communication from District leadership on both a macro and micro level. Some have bemoaned the fact that important decisions are made absent community input (the High School bell schedule was oft-mentioned in this regard); others indicate that even when the community is asked for input, it often feels as though it's for appearance sake only.

Consultants' note: Given the high proliferation of items I and II above, your Consultants believe it may be wise as a Board to spend time further considering the advantages and disadvantages of engaging community involvement in the selection process of a search.

III. Fiscal Impact, Post-McCleary.

The financial challenges post-McCleary are real. Wenatchee will need to operate on reduced revenue and will need to make financial cuts sooner than later. There is high concern in the community about where those cuts will be and which staff members and programs may feel the impact. Coupled with items #I and #II in this section, there is concern that these decisions will not be made with adequate community involvement and input.

IV. Leadership Flight and Loss of Institutional History.

There have been significant senior level departures from the District within the last year – “nine” is the number of departed senior leaders most often cited. This is a major setback to any organization the size of Wenatchee Public Schools. Regardless of the quality of performance of any individual among that group, the loss of capacity as well as institutional memory will have an adverse impact on the organization over the next several months, or longer, as it seeks to reorganize with fewer individuals overseeing more varied functions.

V. Facilities, and Community Support for Future Capital Improvements.

The failure of the bond was a great disappointment – and Wenatchee High School currently has no viable plan to address overcrowding. How to resolve this will be a significant matter for the new Superintendent to undertake. Whether to move forward with a new bond, or whether to find a creative alternative mechanism to allow for building or to otherwise ease crowding, the leadership of Wenatchee Schools will need to prioritize work in this area.

VI. Lack of a Shared Vision and Common Practices.

Among the Elementary schools in particular, there is a not a cohesive set of instructional or operational practices. Site-based management has led to lack of full implementation of curriculum as well as a lack of equity of programs. School leaders are either expected to be or have to be entrepreneurial, which has often times enabled wonderfully innovative programming to occur, but which also creates inefficiencies for the District -- as well as families who might move from one school to another. Related to this, various central services are seen to be – or see themselves – as disconnected from one another, “silos” without a shared vision For many, there is a thirst for a more collaborative modus operandi in the central office.

VII. **Rigor.**

Emerging from a variety of different perspectives was concern about the quality of instructional rigor in pockets across the District. Particularly in light of recent impressive jumps in high school graduation rates, we heard tales of students receiving credit waivers for part-time jobs that had no academic merit; and we verified that high school credit is given for AP Study Hall. We heard parents raise concern about curriculum for high achieving students and correlating lack of differentiation that, for certain students, provides an underwhelming set of learning experiences. Hence there are those who believe that a commitment to rigorous instruction should be a high priority of a new superintendent.

Desired Characteristics of the new Superintendent

The next section refers to the specific criteria that your consultants will use in identifying outstanding prospects for the position of Superintendent of Schools. It is also a document which the Board will use in its deliberations in the *Select* phase of the search.

These Characteristics emanate from our work in the Focus Groups and Interviews and from the results of the *Superintendent Search Survey*. Within our Focus Groups and Interviews, our first two questions ask about strengths and challenges of District; and the third question asks specifically about Desired Characteristics of a new leader. The responses to all three of those questions as well as the results from the widely taken *Survey* help inform and shape the establishment of this criteria.

We provide to the Board these Desired Characteristics as a composite voice from your community and your stakeholders.

The Board of Directors of Wenatchee Public Schools seeks an exceptional educational leader who embodies the following:

PROFESSIONAL

- A visionary, insightful educator and leader with a perspective of the future of education, skilled in collaborating around and executing a vision.
- Experience building an effective governance team; uniting the team with strong collaboration and mutual trust.
- Financial acumen, and the ability to build a collaborative and creative process to address financial needs.
- Demonstrated success building a collaborative culture of inclusiveness and trust throughout the District and community, making use of the expertise of staff, students, and community.
- Experience in strategic planning with a defined track record for implementing a plan with measurable outcomes.
- A clear, trust-building communicator with a commitment to reach constituents across the Wenatchee community.
- An instructional leader with knowledge of research-based, best-practice initiatives thoughtfully initiated and thoroughly evaluated; steeped in policy and research and fostering innovation and learning.
- Successful experience working with a community on bond programs.
- A capable and competent executive with managerial skills around accountability and key performance indicators.

PERSONAL

- Embodies compassion and dedication to educating ALL children both academically and social emotionally; someone who puts children first in actions and decisions.
- Visible and engaged in the community, schools and classrooms making connections and honoring contributions made on behalf of students; someone who prioritizes the well-being of others.
- Strong educational preparation and experience in teaching and administration.
- Inspirational. Inspires others, inspires trust and treats others with fairness and respect.
- Challenges the status quo.
- Visibly shows commitment, courage and a collaborative manner.
- Laser-focused on the work, who makes thoughtful decisions with confidence, grit, strength of conviction, and follow-through.
- A bicultural mindset.
- Personable, approachable, professional –with a sense of humor.
- A person of the highest integrity.

The search team would like to thank all the participants who attended interviews, focus groups meetings, or completed the online survey, with a special call-out to Diana Haglund and Lindee Akers for their great assistance with coordination and logistics. We are deeply appreciative for the coordination, the hospitality, and the commitment to the important work that takes place at Wenatchee every day and we are excited to find the next extraordinary leader for the schools of Wenatchee.

Hank Harris

Barbara Young